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Commission on the Status of Women
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Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern, and further actions and initiatives; priority theme: "The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges"

Statement submitted by Endeavour Forum and JMJ Children's Fund of Canada, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2012/1.

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Statement

JMJ Children's Fund of Canada (JMJ) and Endeavour Forum support the themes of the fifty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women which address issues related to rural women, empowerment, poverty reduction and development. JMJ believes that it is a holistic approach that deals with both sound mind and healthy body that is most beneficial to the development of women in developing nations.

JMJ has been educating girls in the rural areas of Ghana, Haiti, India, Malawi and Uganda for several years. JMJ starts with very young children. For example, in Zambia, JMJ has helped to develop a preschool facility. In some parts of Ghana, this type of preschool preparation is required before children are allowed to begin formal schooling. Some of those children are in great need. Many have parents who have died of AIDS, and are being raised by extended family whose first priority is looking after their own children. Some belong to families that need help with supervision because both parents work. Many are being raised by single mothers.

While supporting day care and early child development, JMJ also provides nutrition not only to the children being directly assisted but also to their families, as some food is inevitably taken home. In addition, the health of those children is being monitored in medical clinics at the day care centres. For example, through the treatment of the early symptoms of malaria, time lost as a result of school absences is reduced. JMJ is therefore helping to heal and educate mind and body, and it is this holistic approach for which both JMJ and Endeavour Forum advocate. When day care of this type is not provided, older children end up looking after the younger ones, and all of them are deprived of a normal childhood. It is for this same reason that Endeavour Forum promotes breastfeeding, which aids speech and brain development in the infant and reduces the risk of breast cancer in the mother.

A concrete example is Elizabeth, a young woman who has become JMJ's first university graduate. First sponsored as a young child in 1999, Elizabeth went on to Cape Coast University in Ghana — one of two women in her class in the faculty of mathematics. She graduated in 2010.

JMJ defines the development of women as not involving education alone or health care alone but as a whole perspective that deals with the entire person, providing the atmosphere for studying and the nutritional component, as well as meeting medical needs. All of the JMJ projects (Ghana, Haiti, India, Uganda and Zambia) have these components to support the development of women in poorer regions of the world.

In each of the strategic themes of the fifty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, JMJ realizes that a holistic approach to the development of children — physically, mentally, emotionally, intellectually and socially — is the key to the development of peoples and, ultimately, the development of women.